

U.S. Extension Service
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
EXTENSION SERVICE
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

August 20, 1948
For your information

TO STATE EXTENSION CLOTHING SPECIALISTS

Subject: Pre-Convention Clothing Specialists' Meeting June 18, 1948

WHO ATTENDED

Ethelwyn Dodson, California; Edna Gray, Illinois; Lucille Rea, Iowa; Mrs. Elsie Williams, Iowa; Christine Wiggins, Kansas; Eves Whitfield, Minnesota; Athelene Scheid, Minnesota; Helen Rocke, Nebraska; Inez LaBossier, New Jersey; Julia Brekke, North Dakota; Mabel McDowell, Pennsylvania; Lavonia Hilbert, Pennsylvania; Lois Reid Stewart, home economist, Dubuque, Iowa; and Edna Sommerfeld, rural youth agent, New York, N.Y.

WHAT WE DID

Several States had been asked to report briefly on what they were doing on children's clothes and simplified clothing construction. Helen Rocke took notes so we could pass on the ideas to those who did not attend.

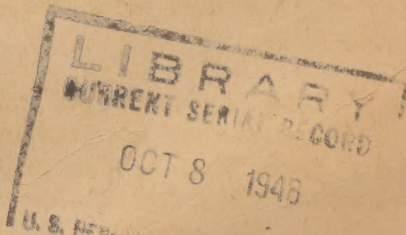
CHILDREN'S CLOTHES

Iowa - Lucille Rea, clothing specialist in Iowa, described themselves as making a "feeble start." Have used a series of three meetings in four counties: 1. Clothing. 2. Feeding. 3. Development.

A number of counties have asked for help on children's clothes construction and some want selection. Construction will include altering of patterns to make clothing more simple and comfortable. Counties are not asking for help on layettes.

North Dakota - State-wide interest. All groups are carrying one lesson, spending the morning in discussion and making a garment by assembly line method in afternoon. Have used Wonderall and Kladeze garments to show example of good design.

California - 1. Buying. Bought different price lines, all in size 5. Made comparisons of fabric, construction and other points. 2. Construction. Made up exhibit of bodices cut from same pattern but varied in trims. Lent from county to county. Splendid way to teach sewing. Learning to sew for children leads to sewing for one's self. Ruffle and saucer sleeves are being used in place of puffed sleeves.



New Jersey - Women prefer to learn to sew for themselves, then can do children's clothes at home. (Gladys Meloche, Wisconsin, confirms this point since she also reports women prefer to sew for themselves because of greater savings.)

Last year Inez LaBossier was asked to prepare a demonstration for the State extension service JMT method. She prepared the outline enclosed in this letter. With a New Jersey child development specialist, Mrs. M.F. McDowell, she arranged to have children help in the demonstration (see outline). In some cases the child puts on the garment. Demonstration received favorable comment from men agents. Outline and report sheets were given to home agents who repeated demonstration in counties. It also was given on a television program. A good follow-up is making children's clothes.

Inez reported meeting with the Gardner Corp., which are working on children's snow suits. There is a possibility that Gardner's will prepare exhibits to lend to States. (Marjorie Lusk, Washington did use a small exhibit from them this spring).

Question came up about improvement in mail-order clothes. Inez reported J.C. Penney Co., had made some progress on sizing and a few design features.

Kansas - Naomi Johnson is planning a master's thesis on what kind of children's clothes mothers want.

PROBLEMS ON CHILDREN'S CLOTHES RAISED BY THE GROUP

1. Getting mothers out to day meetings. How about meetings for both fathers and mothers?
2. Some States are dropping emphasis on "self-help." The word "self-help" is not liked. Can anyone come up with a more appealing name? "Easy-to-wear" was one suggestion.
3. Have any States prepared leaflets to send to young mothers on buying? They should be for women who don't want to sew and who don't attend meetings.
4. Commercial patterns tend to be too complicated. Ready-mades have better designs. North Dakota uses a simplified over-all pattern (Advanco).

SIMPLIFIED SEWING PRACTICES

Pennsylvania - We were having district agent training meetings after the J.C. Penney construction conference, so had the girls bring in machines to try out the practices. Agents liked work meetings. Before convention 60 replies had been received on a questionnaire asking what home agents had done.

Twenty-one agents had not held series of meetings. Thirty-nine agents had had series of meetings with 1 to 16 groups. All but two agents had used some of the practices. Most popular were (in order): 1. Marking with carbon and tracing wheel. 2. Stitching bias seam with grain. 3. Machine basting. 4. Seam guide. 5. Buttonholes.

The results: Increased interest in work and speed. Pennsylvania specialists felt that a new approach and calling procedures "new" motivated use of practices.

California - They are continuing their work on speeding up processes. Are cutting 2 slips, 2 pairs of shorts, 2 children's dresses at the same time. Are making a drive for sharp shears and good tape measures. Construction groups work on the same garment in blouses or children's dresses but use different finishes such as pockets, belts, and collars, so they do not look the same.

Illinois - The club staff have used some of the practices taught by Mrs. Bishop. Edna Gray and Fern Carl plan to take Mrs. Bishop's 2 week course. Afterwards they will hold 2 day district meetings for training home advisers.

In preparation a questionnaire was sent to home advisers asking if they were interested and how they would use factory methods. How many had basic patterns? How many had sewing machines? How many needed help in fitting?

Texas - Miss Edwards, district agent from Texas, came in and gave an impromptu report of Mary Routh's activities. She had attended a district training meeting given by Mary Routh. Both home economics teachers and extension workers were invited. Miss Routh had several garments in various stages of construction, applying Mrs. Bishop's methods. The girls brought in their own sewing machines. Working in groups of two, the girls took measurements and altered their patterns. Dresses were cut out and made, but not all of them were finished. How to apply in county? Give little "throw-in" demonstrations to groups. There is a question of standards along with trying to get sewing out of the way quickly. Probably need to pick out certain things that will simplify and quicken processes.

Miss Edwards expressed her opinion from observation that girls of 4-H Club age want to do things quickly and that we haven't done enough glamorizing of the job of construction. She said that Mary Routh's meetings had taken Texas "by storm." We were glad to have the viewpoint of a district agent.

AMONG THE COMMENTS ON SIMPLIFIED SEWING

1. Should the same simplified methods be taught to 4-H Club girls beginning to sew and to adult women?
2. Perhaps State specialists should get together on simplified sewing practices and so some evaluation. (Idea was dropped by group).
3. Many of our best time-saving practices are learned from the women.
4. "Short cuts" as such were questioned. What is a short cut for one is not a short cut for another. Fabrics, patterns, figure problems all make a difference. Should we not give more attention to the relation of management to clothing problems? And the relation of family living to clothing problems?

SEWING CENTERS

Suggestion was made that we work with home management specialists on a place to sew. The place where all equipment is kept may need to be movable. Mrs. Page's plan for a sewing center was mentioned as being good. Would help to pool experience of homemakers, teachers, and home agents in planning sewing centers. Sewing laboratories in schools are not practical, are often drab, and need changes. Should we establish result demonstrations to show what homemakers have done on organizing sewing centers and simplifying practices? This should be thought about when houses are remodeled. A study and report on sewing centers would be helpful.

Organization of equipment in tailoring and other construction schools is an important device for teaching by setting a good example. Fishing-tackle boxes for sewing tools and paper bags for scraps were two ideas that have been used. Two more methods: Farm labor show exhibits and contests (similar to the ironing-shirt contests tried with success in California).

EVALUATION

Most programs are too full. As specialists we need help in program planning and effective methods. Gladys Gallup, Extension Service, told us pre-test questions can be used with small groups. She was asked the question, what studies have been made to help the specialists in program planning? Answer: Mississippi, Texas and Cass County, Iowa. (Refer to your own copy of Lucinda Crile's Extension Service Circular 449, March 1948, Review of Extension Studies, which was sent to you with my letter of May 26, 1948.)

Each specialist should check on the effectiveness of her teaching but should not check selected clubs. She should list counties alphabetically and then take 1st, 10th, 20th etc. Also choose clubs by number. Make a study of what was taught; then evaluate what leaders teach.

Select one thing to evaluate, then group of specialists work on it. State objectives you are teaching. If teaching "appreciation of color" define appreciation. Must be a concrete definition. In answer to a question Miss Gallup said there are value scales and interest checks to be used as devices to measure intangibles. If any of you are interested in further information on these checks and scales, I shall be glad to send you what is available.

Illinois

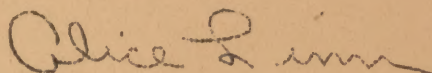
Edna Gray had been asked to make a report on the work they have started in evaluating their clothing teaching. She explained they were at the beginning stage and saw what was not so good about their study. Since most of the rest of us have sat back and been afraid to plunge in on this business of evaluating our work, I think we all admire the nerve of the Illinois specialists. It was suggested that the questionnaires she showed us be sent to all specialists. So my next letter will include the Illinois evaluation report and a similar report from Ohio. The Ohio study is in a more advanced stage, and I am lifting it from their annual report.

I have taken this job of reporting the clothing meeting as seriously as Helen Rocke did when she took notes. Hope it gives you some idea of what we did and said. All of us who were there missed those of you who were not.

NEXT YEAR

Lucy Lane was elected chairman for our group meeting next year. She would like suggestions from you. Drop her a note on what would be helpful to you.

Sincerely,



Alice Linn
Clothing Specialist
Extension Service

Enclosures

